

NC on the Road to Resilience

NC Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

April Edition

North Carolina Bounces Back

Toll Free

Hotline

1-866-279-6279

7 days a week,

8 am to Midnight



Damages sustained to a house in Onslow County due to the April 16, 2011 tornadoes and storms.

Inside This Issue

Available Resources	2
Building Resilience	2
A Story of Resilience	3
Contacts by Type	3
Meet the County Teams	4

Preparedness and Education

North Carolina had not experienced a major weather disaster in several years prior to the tornadoes and storms that occurred on April 16, 2011. The nature of this disaster was dramatically different from that of a hurricane, the type of disaster that has most commonly affected our coastal state in

the past. Many North Carolinians were less prepared and less educated about this type of disaster due to the relative rarity of experiences with severe weather of this magnitude.

For this reason, NC on the Road to Resilience has focused significant efforts on public education and disaster preparedness

in the wake of this tragedy. Over the last eleven months, our teams have worked within their communities to better prepare residents for the future through individual encounters, group sessions and other community events.

 NC on the
Road to Resilience

Available Resources

NC on the Road to Resilience provides free short-term support for individuals, groups, and communities impacted by the April 16, 2011 tornadoes & storms.

For disaster preparedness and response resources or referrals call our toll free hotline at **1-866-279-6279**, seven days a week from 8 a.m. to midnight.

Resources and links to information about disaster preparedness are available on the North Carolina DMH/DD/SAS website at: **www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/services/disasterpreparedness/**

Cumberland County & Sampson County staffs maintain Facebook pages with up-to-date local program information.

Cumberland County -

www.facebook.com/pages/NC-on-Road-to-Resilience-Cumberland-County

Sampson County -

www.facebook.com/pages/NC-on-Road-to-Resilience-Sampson-County

Once on the page, click the "Like" button on the bottom left hand side of the page to follow their posts.

To contact State program personnel, email tameko.piggee@dhhs.nc.gov.

 **NC on the
Road to Resilience**



Damages sustained in Cumberland County were primarily located in more suburban areas in and around Fayetteville.

Building Resilience

NC on the Road to Resilience is made possible by a FEMA-funded grant that is coordinated by the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services and is offered in collaboration with designated agencies on a local level.

The program offers free, short-term interventions that promote individual and family recovery to those people experiencing distress or related emotional and behavioral difficulties from the 2011 tornadoes. The program is designed to assist individuals of all ages to better understand why they feel the way they do and how to

begin to feel safe and confident again moving forward. People who may be in need of more intensive supports are identified and referred as needed by program staff.

One of the main purposes of the program is to build resilience and to support recovery on a local level. While working in the field, crisis counselors have met many people in the affected communities and seen how resilience builds upon itself. The strengths of one person can often bolster the strengths of others.

The program initially deployed teams of crisis counselors throughout the hardest hit communities to con-

duct community and home-based outreach along with psycho-educational services. Participation in the first phase of the program took place in Bladen, Cumberland, Halifax, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Onslow, Robeson, and Sampson counties.

During the second phase of the program, many of the sites operating in the majority of counties have been able to phase down as local resources became available to meet the needs of residents. Eleven months after the disaster, the program continues outreach to communities in Cumberland and Sampson counties.

A Story Of Resilience

Recently, one of the Cumberland County crisis counseling teams encountered a soldier experiencing anxiety related to the April 2011 tornadoes. He told the team that he has been deployed overseas many times and has been shot at more times than he likes to remember, but he has never been as scared as he was the day the tornadoes hit Fayetteville last April.

He was home when the storm hit and ran into the bathroom with his wife and covered her with his body to protect her. Their home sustained heavy damage—the windows were blown out of the back of the house, the siding was torn off, all the trees in their yard were blown down, and one tree crushed their back porch; however, he and his wife were fortunate enough to have escaped injury.

He told program staff that what bothers him the most was his lack of preparation for any type of disaster. He said he knows that there is nothing you can do to prevent a disaster, but he could have been better prepared to cope with the aftermath.

Since the storm, he says he has become almost obsessed with preparing for worst

case scenarios. He started by putting together a supply kit with basic items he and his wife would need in the event of a future weather disaster. Ten months after the disaster, he still feels worried about his family's level of preparedness. He admitted feeling anxiety if he does not purchase some emergency supplies every time he goes to the store.

The crisis counselors were able to talk to him about common reactions to disasters and assure him that he is not alone in feeling the way he does. They applauded him for taking the appropriate steps to build an emergency supply kit.

The team encouraged him to utilize program staff to help him develop better coping skills to deal with the anxiety he feels. The counselors also provided him with additional information, including about the Code Red System, which allows people to register for telephone and text alerts when severe weather is in their area. He had not previously heard about it and immediately called and registered while the team was there.

This encounter shows yet again how resilient North Caro-

linians have been in the aftermath of this disaster. Like this man, many people's response has been to increase their disaster preparedness, but not everyone knows how to go about accomplishing this goal. NC on the Road to Resilience has provided countless opportunities to link people to resources in their communities, to educate about preparedness and to provide reassurance that they are not alone in the wake of a disaster.



Many rural areas, such as the farm in Sampson County pictured above, were dramatically impacted by the storms.

Crisis Counseling Team Contact by Type

Individual Contacts		
Phase 1 2,178	Phase 2 696	Total to Date 2,874
Group Education and Counseling Contacts		
Phase 1 266	Phase 2 102	Total to Date 368
Disseminated Materials		
Phase 1 21,930	Phase 2 15,419	Total to Date 37,349
Community Networking and Coalition Building		
Phase 1 4,996	Phase 2 1,048	Total to Date 6,044

Meet the Cumberland County Teams

The Cumberland County site has had a strong team since they began working shortly after the tornadoes occurred last April. From the beginning, the LME-assigned liaison, Vince Wagner, has worked closely with the State Program Director to ensure that the Cumberland County site's implementation of the program is consistent with the Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) model.

The current team leaders, Karen Lively and Nikki Brown, have worked with the program since day one, beginning as crisis

counselors under the leadership of David Williams. Since opting to hand the reins over to Lively and Brown in November 2011, Williams has continued to remain on staff part-time as an advisor. The program has greatly benefited from the stability provided by these reliable staff members.

The Cumberland County site is comprised of three crisis counselor teams. Each team includes two crisis counselors who work together most of the time. As Lively has noted from experience, team members naturally develop a close working relationship

since they rely on each other daily to perform their duties while maintaining their personal safety in the field. These three teams are staffed by: Shayla Watson and Dana Lucas, Jessica Laub and Laurine LeBlanc, and Amber Upchurch and Alex Bryant.

The site also includes a full-time clerical and data entry staff member, Lee Artis, who aids the teams by performing administrative duties as well as entering data collected by the crisis counselors from their field work.



L to R: Karen Lively, Alex Bryant, Nikki Brown, Shayla Watson, Laurine LeBlanc, Jessica Laub, Vince Wagner and Amber Upchurch (not pictured, Lee Artis & Dana Lucas)

Meet the Sampson County Team

The Sampson County site is partnered with the larger Cumberland County team. The program in Sampson County is led by Connie Tucker who is assisted in her efforts by crisis counselor Jana Barnes.

Following the CCP model means that direct service staff spend

much of their time working out in their communities. For a team leader, this sometimes means taking on additional duties in the field when the team is not fully staffed. In this regard, Tucker has stepped up to the plate recently to fill the currently vacant role of the Sampson County

team's second crisis counselor. Tucker and Barnes have worked for the program since the beginning of the Regular Service Program in late September 2011. During this time, they have worked hard to make contacts in their rural community.



Sampson County staff: Connie Tucker & Jana Barnes